# Some Imagist Poets, 1916

## An Annual Anthology

THE NEW POETRY SERIES

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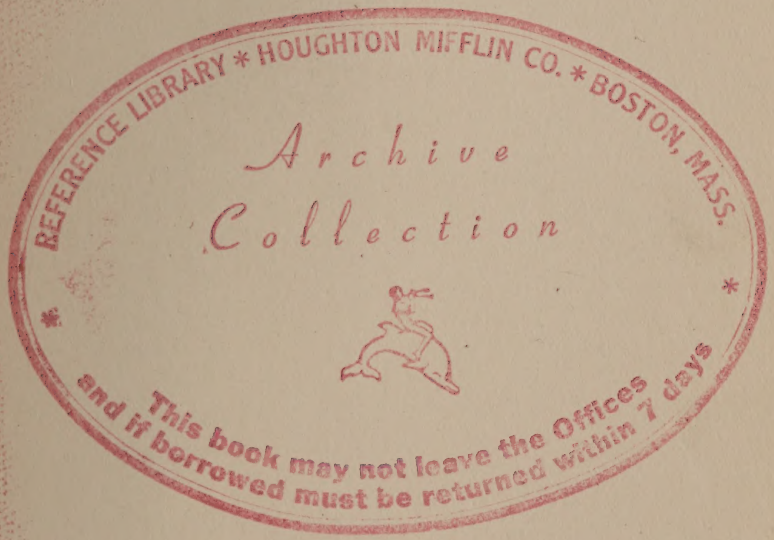
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## The New Poetry Series

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IRRADIATIONS. SAND AND SPRAY. John Gould Fletcher.

SOME IMAGIST POETS.

JAPANESE LYRICS. Translated by Lafcadio Hearn.

AFTERNOONS OF APRIL. Grace Hazard Conkling.

THE CLOISTER: A VERSE DRAMA. Emile Verhaeren.

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ROADS. Grace Fallow Norton.

GOBLINS AND PAGODAS. John Gould Fletcher.

SOME IMAGIST POETS, 1916.

A SONG OF THE GUNS. Gilbert Frankau.

SOME IMAGIST POETS, 1916

# SOME IMAGIST POETS

# 1916

## AN ANNUAL ANTHOLOGY

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1916

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# PREFACE

In bringing the second volume of *Some Imagist Poets* before the public, the authors wish to express their gratitude for the interest which the 1915 volume aroused. The discussion of it was widespread, and even those critics out of sympathy with Imagist tenets accorded it much space. In the Preface to that book, we endeavoured to present those tenets in a succinct form. But the very brevity we employed has lead to a great deal of misunderstanding. We have decided, therefore, to explain the laws which govern us a little more fully. A few people may understand, and the rest can merely misunderstand again, a result to which we are quite accustomed.

In the first place "Imagism" does not mean merely the presentation of pictures. "Imagism" refers to the manner of presentation, not to the subject. It means a clear presentation of whatever the author wishes to convey. Now he may wish to convey a mood of indecision, in which case the poem should be indecisive; he may wish to bring before his reader the constantly shifting and changing lights over a landscape, or the varying attitudes of mind of a person under

strong emotion, then his poem must shift and change to present this clearly. The "exact" word does not mean the word which exactly describes the object in itself, it means the "exact" word which brings the effect of that object before the reader as it presented itself to the poet's mind at the time of writing the poem. Imagists deal but little with similes, although much of their poetry is metaphorical. The reason for this is that while acknowledging the figure to be an integral part of all poetry, they feel that the constant imposing of one figure upon another in the same poem blurs the central effect.

The great French critic, Remy de Gourmont, wrote last Summer in *La France* that the Imagists were the descendants of the French *Symbolistes*. In the Preface to his *Livre des Masques*, M. de Gourmont has thus described *Symbolisme*: "Individualism in literature, liberty of art, abandonment of existing forms . . . The sole excuse which a man can have for writing is to write down himself, to unveil for others the sort of world which mirrors itself in his individual glass . . . He should create his own aesthetics—and we should admit as many aesthetics as there are original minds, and judge them for what they are and not what they are not." In this sense the Imagists are descendants of the *Symbolistes*; they are Individualists.

The only reason that Imagism has seemed so anarchaic and strange to English and American reviewers is that their minds do not easily and quickly suggest the steps by which modern art has arrived at its present position. Its immediate prototype cannot be found in English or American literature, we must turn to Europe for it. With Debussy and Stravinsky in music, and Gauguin and Matisse in painting, it should have been evident to every one that art was entering upon an era of change. But music and painting are universal languages, so we have become accustomed to new idioms in them, while we still find it hard to recognize a changed idiom in literature.

The crux of the situation is just here. It is in the idiom employed. Imagism asks to be judged by different standards from those employed in Nineteenth-Century art. It is small wonder that Imagist poetry should be incomprehensible to men whose sole touchstone for art is the literature of one country for a period of four centuries. And it is an illuminating fact that among poets and men conversant with many poetic idioms, Imagism is rarely misconceived. They may not agree with us, but they do not misunderstand us.

This must not be misconstrued into the desire to belittle our forerunners. On the contrary, the Imagists have the greatest admiration for the past, and humility towards it. But they

have been caught in the throes of a new birth. The exterior world is changing, and with it men's feelings, and every age must express its feelings in its own individual way. No art is any more "egoistic" than another; all art is an attempt to express the feelings of the artist, whether it be couched in narrative form or employ a more personal expression.

It is not what Imagists write about which makes them hard of comprehension; it is the way they write it. All nations have laws of prosody, which undergo changes from time to time. The laws of English metrical prosody are well known to every one concerned with the subject. But that is only one from of prosody. Other nations have had different ones: Anglo-Saxon poetry was founded upon alliteration, Greek and Roman was built upon quantity, the Oriental was formed out of repetition, and the Japanese Hokku got its effects by an exact and never-to-be-added-to series of single syllables. So it is evident that poetry can be written in many modes. That the Imagists base much of their poetry upon cadence and not upon metre makes them neither good nor bad. And no one realizes more than they that no theories nor rules make poetry. They claim for their work only that it is sincere.

It is this very fact of "cadence" which has misled so many reviewers, until some have been betrayed into saying that

the Imagists discard rhythm, when rhythm is the most important quality in their technique. The definition of *vers libre* is — a verse-form based upon cadence. Now cadence in music is one thing, cadence in poetry quite another, since we are not dealing with tone but with rhythm. It is the sense of perfect balance of flow and rhythm. Not only must the syllables so fall as to increase and continue the movement, but the whole poem must be as rounded and recurring as the circular swing of a balanced pendulum. It can be fast or slow, it may even jerk, but this perfect swing it must have, even its jerks must follow the central movement. To illustrate: Suppose a person were given the task of walking, or running, round a large circle, with two minutes given to do it in. Two minutes which he would just consume if he walked round the circle quietly. But in order to make the task easier for him, or harder, as the case might be, he was required to complete each half of the circle in exactly a minute. No other restrictions were placed upon him. He might dawdle in the beginning, and run madly to reach the half-circle mark on time, and then complete his task by walking steadily round the second half to goal. Or he might leap, and run, and skip, and linger in all sorts of ways, making up for slow going by fast, and for extra haste by pauses, and varying these movements on either lap of the circle as the humour seized

him, only so that he were just one minute in traversing the first half-circle, and just one minute in traversing the second. Another illustration which may be employed is that of a Japanese wood-carving where a toad in one corner is balanced by a spray of blown flowers in the opposite upper one. The flowers are not the same shape as the toad, neither are they the same size, but the balance is preserved.

The unit in *vers libre* is not the foot, the number of the syllables, the quantity, or the line. The unit is the strophe, which may be the whole poem, or may be only a part. Each strophe is a complete circle: in fact, the meaning of the Greek word "strophe" is simply that part of the poem which was recited while the chorus were making a turn round the altar set up in the centre of the theatre. The simile of the circle is more than a simile, therefore; it is a fact. Of course the circle need not always be the same size, nor need the times allowed to negotiate it be always the same. There is room here for an infinite number of variations. Also, circles can be added to circles, movement upon movement, to the poem, provided each movement completes itself, and ramifies naturally into the next. But one thing must be borne in mind: a cadenced poem is written to be read aloud, in this way only will its rhythm be felt. Poetry is a spoken and not a written art.

The *vers libristes* are often accused of declaring that they have discovered a new thing. Where such an idea started, it is impossible to say, certainly none of the better *vers libristes* was ever guilty of so ridiculous a statement. The name *vers libre* is new, the thing, most emphatically, is not. Not new in English poetry, at any rate. You will find something very much like it in Dryden's *Threnodia Augustalis*; a great deal of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is written in it; and Matthew Arnold's *Philomela* is a shining example of it. Practically all of Henley's *London Voluntaries* are written in it, and (so potent are names) until it was christened *vers libre*, no one thought of objecting to it. But the oldest reference to *vers libre* is to be found in Chaucer's *House of Fame*, where the Eagle addresses the Poet in these words:

> And nevertheless hast set thy wyt
> Although that in thy heed full lyte is
> To make bookes, songes, or dytees
> In rhyme or elles in cadence.

Commentators have wasted reams of paper in an endeavour to determine what Chaucer meant by this. But is it not possible that he meant a verse based upon rhythm, but which did not follow the strict metrical prosody of his usual practice?

One of the charges frequently brought against the Ima-

gists is that they write, not poetry, but "shredded prose." This misconception springs from the almost complete ignorance of the public in regard to the laws of cadenced verse. But, in fact, what is prose and what is poetry? Is it merely a matter of typographical arrangement? Must everything which is printed in equal lines, with rhymes at the ends, be called poetry, and everything which is printed in a block be called prose? Aristotle, who certainly knew more about this subject than any one else, declares in his *Rhetoric* that prose is rhythmical without being metrical (that is to say, without insistence on any single rhythm), and then goes on to state the feet that are employed in prose, making, incidentally, the remark that the iambic prevailed in ordinary conversation. The fact is, that there is no hard and fast dividing line between prose and poetry. As a French poet of distinction, Paul Fort, has said: "Prose and poetry are but one instrument, graduated." It is not a question of typography; it is not even a question of rules and forms. Poetry is the vision in a man's soul which he translates as best he can with the means at his disposal.

We are young, we are experimentalists, but we ask to be judged by our own standards, not by those which have governed other men at other times.

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RICHARD ALDINGTON

## RICHARD ALDINGTON

### EROS AND PSYCHE

In an old dull yard near Camden Town,
Which echoes with the rattle of cars and 'busses
And freight-trains, puffing steam and smoke and dirt
To the steaming, sooty sky —
There stands an old and grimy statue,
A statue of Psyche and her lover, Eros.

A little nearer Camden Town,
In a square of ugly sordid shops,
Is another statue, facing the Tube,
Staring with a heavy, purposeless glare
At the red and white shining tiles —
A tall stone statue of Cobden.
And though no one ever pauses to see
What hero it is that faces the Tube,
I can understand very well indeed
That England must honour its national heroes,
Must honour the hero of Free Trade —
Or was it the Corn Laws? —
That I can understand.

But what I shall never understand
Is the little group in the dingy yard
Under the dingier sky,
The Eros and Psyche —
Surrounded with pots and terra-cotta busts
And urns and broken pillars —
Eros, naked, with his wings stretched out
Just lighting down to kiss her on the lips.

What are they doing here in Camden Town
In the midst of all this clamour and filth?
They who should stand in a sun-lit room
Hung with deep purple, painted with gods,
Paved with white porphyry,
Stand for ever embraced
By the side of a rustling fountain
Over a marble basin
Carved with leopards and grapes and young men dancing;
Or in a garden leaning above Corinth,
Under the ilices and the cypresses,
Very white against a very blue sky;
Or growing hoary, if they must grow old,
With lichens and softly creeping moss.
What are they doing here in Camden Town?
And who has brought their naked beauty

And their young fresh lust to Camden Town,
Which settled long ago to toil and sweat and filth,
Forgetting—to the greater glory of Free Trade—
Young beauty and young love and youthful flesh?

Slowly the rain settles down on them,
Slowly the soot eats into them,
Slowly the stone grows greyer and dirtier,
Till in spite of his spreading wings
Her eyes have a rim of soot
Half an inch deep,
And his wings, the tall god's wings,
That should be red and silver
Are ocherous brown.

And I peer from a 'bus-top
As we splash through the grease and puddles,
And I glimpse them, huddled against the wall,
Half-hidden under a freight-train's smoke,
And I see the limbs that a Greek slave cut
In some old Italian town,
I see them growing older
And sadder
And greyer.

## AFTER TWO YEARS

She is all so slight
And tender and white
As a May morning.
She walks without hood
At dusk. It is good
To hear her sing.

It is God's will
That I shall love her still
As He loves Mary.
And night and day
I will go forth to pray
That she love me.

She is as gold
Lovely, and far more cold.
Do thou pray with me,
For if I win grace
To kiss twice her face
God has done well to me.

## 1915

THE limbs of gods,
Still, veined marble,
Rest heavily in sleep
Under a saffron twilight.

Not for them battle,
Severed limbs, death, and a cry of victory;
Not for them strife
And a torment of storm.

A vast breast moves slowly,
The great thighs shift,
The stone eyelids rise;
The slow tongue speaks:

"*Only a rain of bright dust;*
*In the outer air;*
*A little whisper of wind;*
*Sleep; rest; forget.*"

Bright dust of battle!
A little whisper of dead souls!

## WHITECHAPEL

Noise;
Iron hoofs, iron wheels, iron din
Of drays and trams and feet passing;
Iron
Beaten to a vast mad cacophony.

*In vain the shrill, far cry*
*Of swallows sweeping by;*
*In vain the silence and green*
*Of meadows Apriline;*
*In vain the clear white rain —*

Soot; mud;
A nation maddened with labour;
Interminable collision of energies —
Iron beating upon iron;
Smoke whirling upwards,
Speechless, impotent.

*In vain the shrill, far cry*
*Of kittiwakes that fly*
*Where the sea waves leap green.*
*The meadows Apriline —*

Noise, iron, smoke;
Iron, iron, iron.

## SUNSETS

THE white body of the evening
Is torn into scarlet,
Slashed and gouged and seared
Into crimson,
And hung ironically
With garlands of mist.

And the wind
Blowing over London from Flanders
Has a bitter taste.

## PEOPLE

Why should you try to crush me?
Am I so Christ-like?

You beat against me,
Immense waves, filthy with refuse.
I am the last upright of a smashed break-water,
But you shall not crush me
Though you bury me in foaming slime
And hiss your hatred about me.

You break over me, cover me;
I shudder at the contact;
Yet I pierce through you
And stand up, torn, dripping, shaken,
But whole and fierce.

## REFLECTIONS

### I

STEAL out with me
Over the moss and the daffodils.

Come to the temple,
Hung with sprays from untrimmed hedges.

I bring you a token
From the golden-haired revellers,
From the mad procession.

Come,
Flute girls shall pipe to us —
Their beautiful fingers! —
They are yellow-throated birds.
They send perfumes from dawn-scented garments,
Bending above us.

Come,
Bind your hair with white poplar,
Let your lips be sweet,
Wild roses of Paestum.

II

Ghost moths hover over asphodel;
Shades, once Laïs' peers
Drift past us;
The mist is grey.

Far over us
The white wave-crests flash in the sun;
The sea-girls lie upon hot, weedy rocks.

Now the Maid returns to us
With fragrance of the world
And of the hours of gods.
On earth
Apple-trees, weighted with red fruit,
Streams, passing through the corn lands,
Hear laughter.

We pluck the asphodel,
Yet we weave no crowns
For we have no vines;
No one speaks here;
No one kisses.

H. D.

## H. D.

### SEA GODS

I

THEY say there is no hope —
Sand — drift — rocks — rubble of the sea —
The broken hulk of a ship,
Hung with shreds of rope,
Pallid under the cracked pitch.

They say there is no hope
To conjure you —
No whip of the tongue to anger you —
No hate of words
You must rise to refute.

They say you are twisted by the sea,
You are cut apart
By wave-break upon wave-break,
That you are misshapen by the sharp rocks,
Broken by the rasp and after-rasp.

That you are cut, torn, mangled,
Torn by the stress and beat,
No stronger than the strips of sand
Along your ragged beach.

II

But we bring violets,
Great masses — single, sweet,
Wood-violets, stream-violets,
Violets from a wet marsh.

Violets in clumps from hills,
Tufts with earth at the roots,
Violets tugged from rocks,
Blue violets, moss, cliff, river-violets.

Yellow violets' gold,
Burnt with a rare tint —
Violets like red ash
Among tufts of grass.

We bring deep-purple
Bird-foot violets.

We bring the hyacinth-violet,
Sweet, bare, chill to the touch—
And violets whiter than the in-rush
Of your own white surf.

III

For you will come,
You will yet haunt men in ships,
You will trail across the fringe of strait
And circle the jagged rocks.

You will trail across the rocks
And wash them with your salt,
You will curl between sand-hills—
You will thunder along the cliff—
Break—retreat—get fresh strength—
Gather and pour weight upon the beach.

You will draw back,
And the ripple on the sand-shelf
Will be witness of your track.

O privet-white, you will paint
The lintel of wet sand with froth.

You will bring myrrh-bark
And drift laurel-wood from hot coasts.
When you hurl high — high —
We will answer with a shout.

For you will come,
You will come,
You will answer our taut hearts,
You will break the lie of men's thoughts,
And cherish and shelter us.

## THE SHRINE

("*She Watches Over the Sea*")

I

ARE your rocks shelter for ships?
Have you sent galleys from your beach —
Are you graded — a safe crescent,
Where the tide lifts them back to port?
Are you full and sweet,
Tempting the quiet
To depart in their trading ships?

Nay, you are great, fierce, evil —
You are the land-blight —
You have tempted men,
But they perished on your cliffs.

Your lights are but dank shoals,
Slate and pebbles and wet shells
And sea-weed fastened to the rocks.

It was evil — evil
When they found you —
When the quiet men looked at you.

They sought a headland,
Shaded with ledge of cliff
From the wind-blast.

But you — you are unsheltered —
Cut with the weight of wind.
You shudder when it strikes,
Then lift, swelled with the blast.
You sink as the tide sinks.
You shrill under the hail, and sound
Thunder when thunder sounds.

You are useless.
When the tides swirl,
Your boulders cut and wreck
The staggering ships.

II

You are useless,
O grave, O beautiful.
The landsmen tell it — I have heard
You are useless.

And the wind sounds with this
And the sea,

Where rollers shot with blue
Cut under deeper blue.

O but stay tender, enchanted,
Where wave-lengths cut you
Apart from all the rest.
For we have found you.
We watch the splendour of you.
We thread throat on throat of freesia
For your shelf.

You are not forgot,
O plunder of lilies—
Honey is not more sweet
Than the salt stretch of your beach.

III

Stay—stay—
But terror has caught us now.
We passed the men in ships.
We dared deeper than the fisher-folk,
And you strike us with terror,
O bright shaft.

Flame passes under us,
And sparks that unknot the flesh,

Sorrow, splitting bone from bone —
Splendour athwart our eyes,
And rifts in the splendour —
Sparks and scattered light.

Many warned of this.
Men said:
There are wrecks on the fore-beach.
Wind will beat your ship.
There is no shelter in that headland.
It is useless waste, that edge,
That front of rock.
Sea-gulls clang beyond the breakers —
None venture to that spot.

IV

But hail —
As the tide slackens,
As the wind beats out,
We hail this shore.
We sing to you,
Spirit between the headlands
And the further rocks.

Though oak-beams split,
Though boats and sea-men flounder,

And the strait grind sand with sand
And cut boulders to sand and drift —

Your eyes have pardoned our faults.
Your hands have touched us.
You have leaned forward a little
And the waves can never thrust us back
From the splendour of your ragged coast.

## TEMPLE — THE CLIFF

### I

GREAT, bright portal,
Shelf of rock,
Rocks fitted in long ledges,
Rocks fitted to dark, to silver-granite,
To lighter rock —
Clean cut, white against white.

High — high — and no hill-goat
Tramples — no mountain-sheep
Has set foot on your fine grass.
You lift, you are the world-edge,
Pillar for the sky-arch.

The world heaved —
We are next to the sky.
Over us, sea-hawks shout,
Gulls sweep past.
The terrible breakers are silent
From this place.

Below us, on the rock-edge,
Where earth is caught in the fissures

Of the jagged cliff,
A small tree stiffens in the gale,
It bends — but its white flowers
Are fragrant at this height.

And under and under,
The wind booms.
It whistles, it thunders,
It growls — it presses the grass
Beneath its great feet.

II

I said:
Forever and forever must I follow you
Through the stones?
I catch at you — you lurch.
You are quicker than my hand/grasp.

I wondered at you.
I shouted — dear — mysterious — beautiful —
White myrtle/flesh.

I was splintered and torn.
The hill/path mounted
Swifter than my feet.

Could a dæmon avenge this hurt,
I would cry to him — could a ghost,
I would shout — O evil,
Follow this god,
Taunt him with his evil and his vice.

III

Shall I hurl myself from here,
Shall I leap and be nearer you?
Shall I drop, beloved, beloved,
Ankle against ankle?
Would you pity me, O white breast?

If I woke, would you pity me,
Would our eyes meet?

Have you heard,
Do you know how I climbed this rock?
My breath caught, I lurched forward —
I stumbled in the ground-myrtle.

Have you heard, O god seated on the cliff,
How far toward the ledges of your house,
How far I had to walk?

IV

Over me the wind swirls.
I have stood on your portal
And I know —
You are further than this,
Still further on another cliff.

## MID-DAY

THE light beats upon me.
I am startled —
A split leaf crackles on the paved floor —
I am anguished — defeated.

A slight wind shakes the seed-pods.
My thoughts are spent
As the black seeds.
My thoughts tear me.
I dread their fever —
I am scattered in its whirl.
I am scattered like
The hot shrivelled seeds.

The shrivelled seeds
Are spilt on the path.
The grass bends with dust.
The grape slips
Under its crackled leaf:
Yet far beyond the spent seed-pods,
And the blackened stalks of mint,
The poplar is bright on the hill,

## H. D.

The poplar spreads out,
Deep-rooted among trees.

O poplar, you are great
Among the hill-stones,
While I perish on the path
Among the crevices of the rocks.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

## JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

### ARIZONA

#### THE WINDMILLS

THE windmills, like great sunflowers of steel,
Lift themselves proudly over the straggling houses;
And at their feet the deep blue-green alfalfa
Cuts the desert like the stroke of a sword.

Yellow melon flowers
Crawl beneath the withered peach-trees;
A date-palm throws its heavy fronds of steel
Against the scoured metallic sky.

The houses, doubled-roofed for coolness,
Cower amid the manzanita scrub.
A man with jingling spurs
Walks heavily out of a vine-bowered doorway,
Mounts his pony, rides away.

The windmills stare at the sun.
The yellow earth cracks and blisters.
Everything is still.

In the afternoon
The wind takes dry waves of heat and tosses them,
Mingled with dust, up and down the streets,
Against the belfry with its green bells:

And, after sunset, when the sky
Becomes a green and orange fan,
The windmills, like great sunflowers on dried stalks,
Stare hard at the sun they cannot follow.

Turning, turning, forever turning
In the chill night-wind that sweeps over the valley,
With the shriek and the clank of the pumps groaning
beneath them,
And the choking gurgle of tepid water.

### MEXICAN QUARTER

By an alley lined with tumble-down shacks
And street-lamps askew, half-sputtering,
Feebly glimmering on gutters choked with filth and dogs
Scratching their mangy backs:
Half-naked children are running about,
Women puff cigarettes in black doorways,
Crickets are crying.
Men slouch sullenly
Into the shadows:
Behind a hedge of cactus,
The smell of a dead horse
Mingles with the smell of tamales frying.

And a girl in a black lace shawl
Sits in a rickety chair by the square of an unglazed window,
And sees the explosion of the stars
Softly poised on a velvet sky.
And she is humming to herself:—
"Stars, if I could reach you,
(You are so very clear that it seems as if I could reach you)

I would give you all to Madonna's image,
On the grey-plastered altar behind the paper flowers,
So that Juan would come back to me,
And we could live again those lazy burning hours
Forgetting the tap of my fan and my sharp words.
And I would only keep four of you,
Those two blue-white ones overhead,
To hang in my ears;
And those two orange ones yonder,
To fasten on my shoe-buckles."

A little further along the street
A man sits stringing a brown guitar.
The smoke of his cigarette curls round his head,
And he, too, is humming, but other words:
"Think not that at your window I wait;
New love is better, the old is turned to hate.
Fate! Fate! All things pass away;
Life is forever, youth is for a day.
Love again if you may
Before the stars are blown out of the sky
And the crickets die;
Babylon and Samarkand
Are mud walls in a waste of sand."

### RAIN IN THE DESERT

THE huge red-buttressed mesa over yonder
Is merely a far-off temple where the sleepy sun is burning
Its altar-fires of pinyon and of toyon for the day.

The old priests sleep, white-shrouded,
Their pottery whistles lie beside them, the prayer-sticks
closely feathered;
On every mummied face there glows a smile.

The sun is rolling slowly
Beneath the sluggish folds of the sky-serpents,
Coiling, uncoiling, blue-black, sparked with fires.

The old dead priests
Feel in the thin dried earth that is heaped about them,
Above the smell of scorching oozing pinyon,
The acrid smell of rain.

And now the showers
Surround the mesa like a troop of silver dancers:
Shaking their rattles, stamping, chanting, roaring,
Whirling, extinguishing the last red wisp of light.

### CLOUDS ACROSS THE CANYON

Shadows of clouds
March across the canyon,
Shadows of blue hands passing
Over a curtain of flame.

Clutching, staggering, upstriking,
Darting in blue-black fury,
To where pinnacles, green and orange,
Await.

The winds are battling and striving to break them:
Thin lightnings spit and flicker,
The peaks seem a dance of scarlet demons
Flitting amid the shadows.

Grey rain-curtains wave afar off,
Wisps of vapour curl and vanish.
The sun throws soft shafts of golden light
Over rose-buttressed palisades.

Now the clouds are a lazy procession;
Blue balloons bobbing solemnly
Over black-dappled walls,

Where rise sharp-fretted, golden-roofed cathedrals
Exultantly, and split the sky with light.

## THE UNQUIET STREET

By day and night this street is not still:
Omnibuses with red tail-lamps,
Taxicabs with shiny eyes,
Rumble, shunning its ugliness.
It is corrugated with wheel-ruts,
It is dented and pockmarked with traffic,
It has no time for sleep.
It heaves its old scarred countenance
Skyward between the buildings
And never says a word.

On rainy nights
It dully gleams
Like the cold tarnished scales of a snake:
And over it hang arc-lamps,
Blue-white death-lilies on black stems.

## IN THE THEATRE

Darkness in the theatre:
Darkness and a multitude
Assembled in the darkness.
These who every day perform
The unique tragi-comedy
Of birth and death;
Now press upon each other,
Directing the irresistible weight of their thoughts
to the stage.

A great broad shaft of calcium light
Cleaves, like a stroke of a sword, the darkness:
And, at the end of it,
A tiny spot which is the red nose of a comedian
Marks the goal of the spot-light and the eyes which
people the darkness.

## SHIPS IN THE HARBOUR

LIKE a flock of great blue cranes
Resting upon the water,
The ships assemble at morning, when the grey light wakes
in the east.

Weary, no longer flying,
Over the hissing spindrift, through the ravelled clutching
sea;
No longer over the tops of the waves spinning along north-
eastward,
In a great irregular wedge before the trade-wind far from
land.

But drowsy, mournful, silent,
Yet under their bulged projecting bows runs the silver foam
of the sunlight,
And rebelliously they shake out their plumage of sails, wet
and heavy with the rain.

## THE EMPTY HOUSE

Out from my window-sill I lean,
And see a straight four-storied row
Of houses.

Once, long ago,
These had their glory: they were built
In the fair palmy days before
The Civil War when all the seas
Saw the white sails of Yankee ships
Scurrying home with spice and gold.
And many of these houses hung
Proud wisps of crêpe upon their doors
On hearing that some son had died
At Chancellorsville or Fredericksburg,
Their offering to the Union side.

But man's forever drifting will
Again took hold of him — again
The fashionable quarter shifted: soon,
Before some plastering had dried,
Society packed up, went away.
Now, could you see these houses,
You would not think they ever had a prime:

A grim four-storied serried row
Of rooms to let — at any time
Tenants are moving in or out.
Families drifting down or struggling still
To keep their heads up and not drown.
A tragic busy pettiness
Has settled on them all,
But one.
And in that one, when I came here,
A family lived, but with its trunks packed up,
And now that family's gone.

Its shutterless blindless windows let you look inside
And see the sunlight chequering the bare floor
With patterns from the window-frames
All day.
Its backyard neatly swept,
Contains no crammed ash-barrels and no lines
For clothes to flap about on;
It does not look by day as if it had
Ever a living soul beneath its roof.
It seems to mark a gap in the grim line,
No house at all, but an unfinished shell.

But when the windows up and down those faces
With yellow glimmer of gas, blaze forth;

I know it is the only house that lives
In all that grim four-storied row.
The others are mere shelves, overcrowded layers,
Of warring, separate personalities;
A jangle and a tangle of emotions,
Without a single meaning running through them;
But it, the empty house, has mastered all its secrets.
Behind its silent swarthy face,
Eyelessly proud,
It watches, it is master;
It sees the other houses still incessantly learning
The lesson it remembers,
And which it can repeat the last dim syllable of.

## THE SKATERS

*To A. D. R.*

Black swallows swooping or gliding
In a flurry of entangled loops and curves;
The skaters skim over the frozen river.
And the grinding click of their skates as they impinge
upon the surface,
Is like the brushing together of thin wing-tips of
silver.

F. S. FLINT

## F. S. FLINT

### EASTER

FRIEND
we will take the path that leads
down from the flagstaff by the pond
through the gorse thickets;
see, the golden spikes have thrust their points through,
and last year's bracken lies yellow-brown and trampled.
The sapling birch-groves have shown no leaf,
and the wistarias on the desolate pergola
are shorn and ashen.
We lurch on, and, stumbling,
touch each other.
You do not shrink, friend.
There you, and I here,
side by side, we go, jesting.
We do not seek, we do not avoid, contact.

Here is the road,
with the budding elm-trees lining it,
and there the low gate in the wall;
on the other side, the people.

Are they not aliens?
You and I for a moment see them
shabby of limb and soul,
patched up to make shift.
We laugh and strengthen each other;
But the evil is done.

Is not the whole park made for them,
and the bushes and plants and trees and grasses,
have they not grown to their standard?
The paths are worn to the gravel with their feet;
the green moss will not carpet them.
The flags of the stone steps are hollowed;
and you and I must strive to remain two
and not to merge in the multitude.
It impinges on us; it separates us;
we shrink from it; we brave through it;
we laugh; we jest; we jeer;
and we save the fragments of our souls.

Between two clipped privet hedges now;
we will close our eyes for life's sake
to life's patches.
Here, maybe, there is quiet;
pass first under the bare branches,
beyond is a pool flanked with sedge,

and a swan among water-lilies.
But here too is a group
of men and women and children;
and the swan has forgotten its pride;
it thrusts its white neck among them,
and gobbles at nothing;
then tires of the cheat and sails off;
but its breast urges before it
a sheet of sodden newspaper
that, drifting away,
reveals beneath the immaculate white splendour
of its neck and wings
a breast black with scum.

Friend, we are beaten.

## OGRE

THROUGH the open window can be seen
the poplars at the end of the garden
shaking in the wind,
a wall of green leaves so high
that the sky is shut off.

On the white table-cloth
a rose in a vase
— centre of a sphere of odour —
contemplates the crumbs and crusts
left from a meal:
cups, saucers, plates lie
here and there.

And a sparrow flies by the open window,
stops for a moment,
flutters his wings rapidly,
and climbs an aerial ladder

with his claws
that work close in
to his soft, brown-grey belly.

But behind the table is the face of a man.

The bird flies off.

## CONES

THE blue mist of after-rain
fills all the trees;

the sunlight gilds the tops
of the poplar spires, far off,
behind the houses.

Here a branch sways
and there
a sparrow twitters.

The curtain's hem, rose-embroidered,
flutters, and half reveals
a burnt-red chimney pot.

The quiet in the room
bears patiently
a footfall on the street.

## GLOOM

I SAT there in the dark
of the room and of my mind
thinking of men's treasons and bad faith,
sinking into the pit of my own weakness
before their strength of cunning.
Out over the gardens came the sound of some one
playing five-finger exercises on the piano.

Then
I gathered up within me all my powers
until outside of me was nothing:
I was all —
all stubborn, fighting sadness and revulsion.

And one came from the garden quietly,
and stood beside me.
She laid her hand on my hair;
she laid her cheek on my forehead, —
and caressed me with it;
but all my being rose to my forehead
to fight against this outside thing.
Something in me became angry;

withstood like a wall,
and would allow no entrance;
I hated her.

"What is the matter with you, dear?" she said.
"Nothing," I answered,
"I am thinking."
She stroked my hair and went away;
and I was still gloomy, angry, stubborn.

Then I thought:
she has gone away; she is hurt;
she does not know
what poison has been working in me.

Then I thought:
upstairs, her child is sleeping;
and I felt the presence
of the fields we had walked over, the roads we had followed,
the flowers we had watched together,
before it came.

She had touched my hair, and only then did I feel it;
And I loved her once again.

And I came away,
full of the sweet and bitter juices of life;
and I lit the lamp in my room,
and made this poem.

## TERROR

Eyes are tired;
the lamp burns,
and in its circle of light
papers and books lie
where chance and life
have placed them.

Silence sings all around me;
my head is bound with a band;
outside in the street a few footsteps;
a clock strikes the hour.

I gaze, and my eyes close,
slowly:

I doze; but the moment before sleep,
a voice calls my name
in my ear,
and the shock jolts my heart:
but when I open my eyes,
and look, first left, and then right . . .

no one is there.

## CHALFONT SAINT GILES

THE low graves are all grown over
with forget-me-not,
and a rich-green grass
links each with each.
Old family vaults,
some within railings,
stand here and there,
crumbling, moss-eaten,
with the ivy growing up them
and diagonally across
the top projecting slab.
And over the vaults
lean the great lilac bushes
with their heart-shaped leaves
and their purple and white blossom.
A wall of ivy shuts off the darkness
of the elm-wood and the larches.

Walk quietly
along the mossy paths;
the stones of the humble dead
are hidden behind the blue mantle
of their forget-me-nots;

and before one grave so hidden
a widow kneels, with head bowed,
and the crape falling
over her shoulders.

The bells for evening church are ringing,
and the people come gravely
and with red, sun-burnt faces
through the gates in the wall.

Pass on;
this is the church-porch,
and within the bell-ringers,
men of the village in their Sunday clothes,
pull their bob-major
on the red and white grip
of the bell-ropes, that fly up,
and then fall snakily.
They stand there given wholly
to the rhythm and swing
of their traditional movements.

And the people pass between them
into the church;
but we are too sad and too reverent
to enter.

## WAR-TIME

If I go out of the door,
it will not be
to take the road to the left that leads
past the bovine quiet of houses
brooding over the cud of their daily content,
even though
the tranquillity of their gardens
is a lure that once was stronger;
even though
from privet hedge and mottled laurel
the young green peeps,
and the daffodils
and the yellow and white and purple crocuses
laugh from the smooth mould
of the garden beds
to the upright golden buds of the chestnut trees.
I shall not see
the almond blossom shaming
the soot-black boughs.

But to the right the road will lead me
to greater and greater disquiet;
into the swift rattling noise of the motor-'busses,

and the dust, the tattered paper —
the detritus of a city —
that swirls in the air behind them.
I will pass the shops where the prices
are judged day by day by the people,
and come to the place where five roads meet
with five tram-routes,
and where amid the din
of the vans, the lorries, the motor-'busses,
the clangorous tram-cars,
the news is shouted,
and soldiers gather, off-duty.

Here I can feel the heat of Europe's fever;
and I can make,
as each man makes the beauty of the woman he loves,
no spring and no woman's beauty,
while that is burning.

D. H. LAWRENCE

## D. H. LAWRENCE

### ERINNYES

THERE has been so much noise,
Bleeding and shouting and dying,
Clamour of death.

There are so many dead,
Many have died unconsenting,
Their ghosts are angry, unappeased.

So many ghosts among us,
Invisible, yet strong,
Between me and thee, so many ghosts of the slain.

They come back, over the white sea, in the mist,
Invisible, trooping home, the unassuaged ghosts
Endlessly returning on the uneasy sea.

They set foot on this land to which they have the right,
They return relentlessly, in the silence one knows their tread,
Multitudinous, endless, the ghosts coming home again.

They watch us, they press on us,
They press their claim upon us,
They are angry with us.

What do they want?
We are driven mad,
Madly we rush hither and thither:
Shouting, "Revenge, Revenge,"
Crying, "Pour out the blood of the foe,"
Seeking to appease with blood the insistent ghosts.

Out of blood rise up new ghosts,
Grey, stern, angry, unsatisfied,
The more we slay and are slain, the more we raise up new ghosts against us.

Till we are mad with terror, seeing the slain
Victorious, grey, grisly ghosts in our streets,
Grey, unappeased ghosts seated in the music-halls.
The dead triumphant, and the quick cast down,
The dead, unassuaged and angry, silencing us,
Making us pale and bloodless, without resistance.

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## D. H. LAWRENCE

What do they want, the ghosts, what is it
They demand as they stand in menace over against us?
How shall we now appease whom we have raised up?

Since from blood poured out rise only ghosts again,
What shall we do, what shall we give to them?
What do they want, forever there on our threshold?

Must we open the doors, and admit them, receive them home,
And in the silence, reverently, welcome them,
And give them place and honour and service meet?

For one year's space, attend on our angry dead,
Soothe them with service and honour, and silence meet,
Strengthen, prepare them for the journey hence,
Then lead them to the gates of the unknown,
And bid farewell, oh stately travellers,
And wait till they are lost upon our sight.

Then we shall turn us home again to life
Knowing our dead are fitly housed in death,
Not roaming here disconsolate, angrily.

And we shall have new peace in this our life,
New joy to give more life, new bliss to live,
Sure of our dead in the proud halls of death.

## PERFIDY

Hollow rang the house when I knocked at the door,
And I lingered on the threshold with my hand
Upraised to knock and knock once more:
Listening for the sound of her feet across the floor,
Hollow re-echoed my heart.

The low-hung lamps stretched down the road
With shadows drifting underneath,
With a music of soft, melodious feet
Quickening my hope as I hastened to meet
The low-hung light of her eyes.

The golden lamps down the street went out,
The last car trailed the night behind,
And I in the darkness wandered about
With a flutter of hope and of dark-shut doubt
In the dying lamp of my love.

Two brown ponies trotting slowly
Stopped at the dim-lit trough to drink.
The dark van drummed down the distance slowly,
And city stars so high and holy
Drew nearer to look in the streets.

A hasting car swept shameful past.
I saw her hid in the shadow,
I saw her step to the curb, and fast
Run to the silent door, where last
I had stood with my hand uplifted.
She clung to the door in her haste to enter,
Entered, and quickly cast
It shut behind her, leaving the street aghast.

## AT THE WINDOW

The pine trees bend to listen to the autumn wind as it mutters
Something which sets the black poplars ashake with hysterical laughter;
While slowly the house of day is closing its eastern shutters.

Further down the valley the clustered tombstones recede
Winding about their dimness the mists' grey cerements, after
The street-lamps in the twilight have suddenly started to bleed.

The leaves fly over the window and whisper a word as they pass
To the face that leans from the darkness, intent, with two eyes of darkness
That watch forever earnestly from behind the window glass.

## IN TROUBLE AND SHAME

I LOOK at the sweeling sunset
And wish I could go also
Through the red doors beyond the black-purple bar.

I wish that I could go
Through the red doors where I could put off
My shame like shoes in the porch
My pain like garments,
And leave my flesh discarded lying
Like luggage of some departed traveller
Gone one knows not where.

Then I would turn round
And seeing my cast-off body lying like lumber,
I would laugh with joy.

## BROODING GRIEF

A YELLOW leaf from the darkness
Hops like a frog before me —
— Why should I start and stand still?

I was watching the woman that bore me
Stretched in the brindled darkness
Of the sick-room, rigid with will
To die —
And the quick leaf tore me
Back to this rainy swill
Of leaves and lamps and traffic mingled before me.

AMY LOWELL

## AMY LOWELL

### PATTERNS

I WALK down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.
I walk down the patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
With my powdered hair and jewelled fan,
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,
And the train
Makes a pink and silver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion,
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whale-bone and brocade.

And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.
The daffodils and squills
Flutter in the breeze
As they please.
And I weep;
For the lime tree is in blossom
And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

And the plashing of waterdrops
In the marble fountain
Comes down the garden paths.
The dripping never stops.
Underneath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water
Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!
I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground.
All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths,
And he would stumble after
Bewildered by my laughter.
I should see the sun flashing from his sword hilt and
the buckles on his shoes.
I would choose
To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths,
A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover,
Till he caught me in the shade,
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as
he clasped me,
Aching, melting, unafraid.
With the shadows of the leaves and the sundrops,
And the plopping of the waterdrops,
All about us in the open afternoon—
I am very like to swoon
With the weight of this brocade,
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom
In my bosom,
Is a letter I have hid.
It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the
Duke.
'Madam, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell

Died in action Thursday sen'night."
As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,
The letters squirmed like snakes.
"Any answer, Madam," said my footman.
"No," I told him.
"See that the messenger takes some refreshment.
No, no answer."
And I walked into the garden,
Up and down the patterned paths,
In my stiff, correct brocade.
The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,
Each one.
I stood upright too,
Held rigid to the pattern
By the stiffness of my gown.
Up and down I walked,
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my husband.
In a month, here, underneath this lime,
We would have broke the pattern.
He for me, and I for him,
He as Colonel, I as Lady,
On this shady seat.
He had a whim
That sunlight carried blessing.

And I answered, " It shall be as you have said."
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down,
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be guarded from em-
brace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?

## SPRING DAY

### BATH

THE day is fresh-washed and fair, and there is a smell of tulips and narcissus in the air.

The sunshine pours in at the bath-room window and bores through the water in the bath-tub in lathes and planes of greenish white. It cleaves the water into flaws like a jewel, and cracks it to bright light.

Little spots of sunshine lie on the surface of the water and dance, dance, and their reflections wobble deliciously over the ceiling; a stir of my finger sets them whirring, reeling. I move a foot and the planes of light in the water jar. I lie back and laugh, and let the green-white water, the sun-flawed beryl water, flow over me. The day is almost too bright to bear, the green water covers me from the too bright day. I will lie here awhile and play with the water and the sun spots.

The sky is blue and high. A crow flaps by the window, and there is a whiff of tulips and narcissus in the air.

### BREAKFAST TABLE

In the fresh-washed sunlight, the breakfast table is decked and white. It offers itself in flat surrender, tendering tastes, and smells, and colours, and metals, and grains, and the white

cloth falls over its side, draped and wide. Wheels of white glitter in the silver coffee pot, hot and spinning like cather-ine-wheels, they whirl, and twirl — and my eyes begin to smart, the little white, dazzling wheels prick them like darts. Placid and peaceful the rolls of bread spread them-selves in the sun to bask. A stack of butter-pats, pyramidal, shout orange through the white, scream, flutter, call: "Yel-low! Yellow! Yellow!" Coffee steam rises in a stream, clouds the silver tea-service with mist, and twists up into the sunlight, revolved, involuted, suspiring higher and higher, fluting in a thin spiral up the high blue sky. A crow flies by and croaks at the coffee steam. The day is new and fair with good smells in the air.

### WALK

Over the street the white clouds meet, and sheer away without touching.

On the sidewalk boys are playing marbles. Glass marbles, with amber and blue hearts, roll together and part with a sweet clashing noise. The boys strike them with black and red striped agates. The glass marbles spit crimson when they are hit, and slip into the gutters under rushing brown water. I smell tulips and narcissus in the air, but there are no flowers anywhere, only white dust whipping up the street, and a girl with a gay spring hat and blowing skirts. The dust and the wind flirt at her ankles and her neat, high-

heeled patent leather shoes. Tap, tap, the little heels pat the pavement, and the wind rustles among the flowers on her hat.

A water-cart crawls slowly on the other side of the way. It is green and gay with new paint, and rumbles contentedly sprinkling clear water over the white dust. Clear zig-zagging water which smells of tulips and narcissus.

The thickening branches make a pink "grisaille" against the blue sky.

Whoop! The clouds go dashing at each other and sheer away just in time. Whoop! And a man's hat careers down the street in front of the white dust, leaps into the branches of a tree, veers away and trundles ahead of the wind, jarring the sunlight into spokes of rose-colour and green.

A motor car cuts a swath through the bright air, sharp-beaked, irresistible, shouting to the wind to make way. A glare of dust and sunshine tosses together behind it, and settles down. The sky is quiet and high, and the morning is fair with fresh-washed air.

### MIDDAY AND AFTERNOON

Swirl of crowded streets. Shock and recoil of traffic. The stock-still brick façade of an old church, against which the waves of people lurch and withdraw. Flare of sunshine down side-streets. Eddies of light in the windows of chemists' shops, with their blue, gold, purple jars, darting colours far

into the crowd. Loud bangs and tremors, murmurings out of high windows, whirling of machine belts, blurring of horses and motors. A quick spin and shudder of brakes on an electric car, and the jar of a church bell knocking against the metal blue of the sky. I am a piece of the town, a bit of blown dust, thrust along with the crowd. Proud to feel the pavement under me, reeling with feet. Feet tripping, skipping, lagging, dragging, plodding doggedly, or springing up and advancing on firm elastic insteps. A boy is selling papers, I smell them clean and new from the press. They are fresh like the air, and pungent as tulips and narcissus.

The blue sky pales to lemon, and great tongues of gold blind the shop-windows putting out their contents in a flood of flame.

### NIGHT AND SLEEP

The day takes her ease in slippered yellow. Electric signs gleam out along the shop fronts, following each other. They grow, and grow, and blow into patterns of fire-flowers, as the sky fades. Trades scream in spots of light at the unruffled night. Twinkle, jab, snap, that means a new play ; and over the way: plop, drop, quiver is the sidelong sliver of a watchmaker's sign with its length on another street. A gigantic mug of beer effervesces to the atmosphere over a tall building, but the sky is high and has her own stars, why should she heed ours?

I leave the city with speed. Wheels whirl to take me back to my trees and my quietness. The breeze which blows with me is fresh-washed and clean, it has come but recently from the high sky. There are no flowers in bloom yet, but the earth of my garden smells of tulips and narcissus.

My room is tranquil and friendly. Out of the window I can see the distant city, a band of twinkling gems, little flower heads with no stems. I cannot see the beer glass, nor the letters of the restaurants and shops I passed, now the signs blur and all together make the city, glowing on a night of fine weather, like a garden stirring and blowing for the Spring.

The night is fresh-washed and fair and there is a whiff of flowers in the air.

Wrap me close, sheets of lavender. Pour your blue and purple dreams into my ears. The breeze whispers at the shutters and mutters queer tales of old days, and cobbled streets, and youths leaping their horses down marble stair-ways. Pale blue lavender, you are the colour of the sky when it is fresh-washed and fair . . . I smell the stars . . . they are like tulips and narcissus . . . I smell them in the air.

## STRAVINSKY'S THREE PIECES, "GROTESQUES" FOR STRING QUARTET

This Quartet was played from the manuscript by the Flonzaley Quartet during their season of 1915 and 1916. The poem is based upon the programme which M. Stravinsky appended to his piece, and is an attempt to reproduce the sound and movement of the music as far as is possible in another medium.

### FIRST MOVEMENT

THIN-VOICED, nasal pipes
Drawing sound out and out
Until it is a screeching thread,
Sharp and cutting, sharp and cutting,
It hurts.
Whee-e-e!
Bump! Bump! Tong-ti-bump!
There are drums here,
Banging,
And wooden shoes beating the round, grey stones
Of the market-place.
Whee-e-e!
Sabots slapping the worn, old stones,
And a shaking and cracking of dancing bones,
Clumsy and hard they are,

And uneven,
Losing half a beat
Because the stones are slippery.
Bump/e/ty/tong! Whee/e/e! Tong!
The thin Spring leaves
Shake to the banging of shoes.
Shoes beat, slap,
Shuffle, rap,
And the nasal pipes squeal with their pigs'
voices,
Little pigs' voices
Weaving among the dancers,
A fine, white thread
Linking up the dancers.
Bang! Bump! Tong!
Petticoats,
Stockings,
Sabots,
Delirium flapping its thigh/bones;
Red, blue, yellow,
Drunkenness steaming in colours;
Red, yellow, blue,
Colours and flesh weaving together,
In and out, with the dance,
Coarse stuffs and hot flesh weaving together.
Pigs' cries white and tenuous,

White and painful,
White and—
Bump!
Tong!

SECOND MOVEMENT

Pale violin music whiffs across the moon,
A pale smoke of violin music blows over the
moon,
Cherry petals fall and flutter,
And the white Pierrot,
Wreathed in the smoke of the violins,
Splashed with cherry petals falling, falling,
Claws a grave for himself in the fresh earth
With his finger-nails.

THIRD MOVEMENT

An organ growls in the heavy roof-groins of a
church,
It wheezes and coughs.
The nave is blue with incense,
Writhing, twisting,
Snaking over the heads of the chanting priests.
*Requiem æternam dona ei, Domine;*
The priests whine their bastard Latin

And the censers swing and click.
The priests walk endlessly
Round and round,
Droning their Latin
Off the key.
The organ crashes out in a flaring chord
And the priests hitch their chant up half a tone.
*Dies illa, dies iræ,*
*Calamitatis et miseriæ,*
*Dies magna et amara valde.*
A wind rattles the leaded windows.
The little pear-shaped candle-flames leap and flutter.
*Dies illa, dies iræ,*
The swaying smoke drifts over the altar.
*Calamitatis et miseriæ,*
The shuffling priests sprinkle holy water.
*Dies magna et amara valde.*
And there is a stark stillness in the midst of them,
Stretched upon a bier.
His ears are stone to the organ,
His eyes are flint to the candles,
His body is ice to the water.
Chant, priests,
Whine, shuffle, genuflect.

He will always be as rigid as he is now
Until he crumbles away in a dust heap.
*Lacrymosa dies illa,*
*Qua resurget ex favilla*
*Judicandus homo reus.*
Above the grey pillars, the roof is in darkness.

THE END

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